



Arlington Bicycle Advisory Committee

Minutes

Date: August 18th, 2021

Time: 7:15PM

Location: Via Zoom conference

Attendees:

Executive committee: Christopher Tonkin (chair), Jack Johnson, Muris Kobaslija, Adam MacNeill (treasurer; joined after meeting convened), Doug Mayo-Wells (secretary), Scott Smith (TAC liaison)

Town of Arlington: Daniel Amstutz (Sr Transportation Planner)

Members of the public: Phil Goff (East Arlington Liveable Streets (EALS), resident), Alex Levering (Urban planner City of Cambridge, resident), Petru Sofio (Resident)

1. Greetings and Introductions, ground rules for online meetings.

Christopher Tonkin advised that the meeting is held remotely related to COVID-19 Measures Adopted during the State of Emergency. Tonkin notified attendees that Committee secretary Doug Mayo-Wells is taking minutes; the meeting is being recorded for the purposes of verifying the minutes; and the recording will be deleted after the minutes are approved. Tonkin confirmed the committee members and others in attendance for the meeting.

See:

<https://www.mass.gov/service-details/updated-guidance-on-holding-meetings-pursuant-to-the-act-extending-certain-covid-19-measures>

2. Approval of the outstanding minutes for previous meetings.

Doug Mayo-Wells thanks Daniel Amstutz for feedback in the document and informs that committee that the word "accident" was replaced with "crash," in addition to correction of typos.

Scott Smith moves to approve minutes from April, as amended by Amstutz

Muris Kobaslija seconds; motion carries 4-0, 1 abstention

3. Report from COBWEB Officer.

Not present.

4. TAC (Transportation Advisory Committee) report.

Smith: 4 items to briefly mention, but may touch on in other agenda items:

a. Crossing of Lake St under Rt. 2:

There are bike lanes on Lake Street in Arlington on either side of Rt 2 underpass, but the underpass itself has 2 narrow westbound travel lanes (more than needed) and no bike accommodation. Could establish a bike lane westbound by repainting (eastbound is trickier).

TAC discussed, agreed it is worth addressing. David Loutzenheiser (MAPC (Metropolitan Area Planning Council) Sr Transportation Planner) is aware of the issue.

Phil Goff: has prepared some design treatments, similar level of detail to Appleton proposals from last year

Smith: Howard Muise (TAC chair) maybe proposing essentially same treatment, at Lake St & ramp to Rt 2 westbound, through-lane and right-turn lane; then 1 traffic lane under the bridge (leaves room for bike lane), and the other side left-turn lane, 1 through-lane, and bike lane.

Petru Sofio: Notes that the road surface is currently in poor condition where the lane is proposed. West of Rt 2, the bike lane is only on downhill (eastbound), not uphill (westbound), why was it done this way?

Smith: Recollection is that it was a road geometry issue, constraints of Rt. 2 ramp.

b. New signal at Lake St & bikeway:

Sofio raised concern about bike detection not working consistently.

Bids are in to get bike lane markings painted on Lake St.

Seems to be working well at off-peak hours, but observed long delays for the path at peak times, resulting in path users running light. Back ups at Mass Ave light are increasing traffic on Orvis Rd; likely needs further adjustment. For those who use it a lot, is it working for you?

Tonkin: Did some observations with Sofio, then Sofio did more.

Sofio: Department of Public Works (DPW) sent into recall 12 Aug after complaint filed. Bike detection appears to have been fixed, but now pedestrians are not getting a walk indication if the button is not pressed. DPW is waiting for a module to be installed in the signal box to activate the "wait for green" feature (which provides confirmation for cyclists that they have been detected).

- c. Mass Trails grant, Amstutz will cover.
- d. Mass Ave and Appleton, already an agenda item, so let's move on.

5. Tour of Arlington for 2021.

Tonkin: Smith provided tour proposal in Google Maps

[https://www.google.com/maps/@42.4143727,-](https://www.google.com/maps/@42.4143727,-71.1667448,14z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m3!11m2!2sJqrUxqsPhYtpGSHkgZqe7mnp3spAPA!3e3)

[71.1667448,14z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m3!11m2!2sJqrUxqsPhYtpGSHkgZqe7mnp3spAPA!3e3](https://www.google.com/maps/@42.4143727,-71.1667448,14z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m3!11m2!2sJqrUxqsPhYtpGSHkgZqe7mnp3spAPA!3e3)

Pre-COVID we ran family/inexperienced rider-friendly annual bike tours of Arlington places-of-interest; hoping to reinstitute for fall (during Bay State Bike Month; <https://www.baystatebikemonth.org>) as self-paced tour with guides stationed at each point-of-interest and available to talk about it. (To better support social distancing.)

Proposed points-of-interests

- a. Arlington's Great Meadow (in Lexington, but owned by the Town; right off the Minuteman Bikeway; could talk about how Arlington came to own this parcel of land.)
- b. Hurd Field (off the Bikeway by Trader Joe's, near the reservoir; could talk about plans for improving paths around the reservoir)
- c. Mass Ave/Appleton intersection (could talk about safety remediation efforts after serious crashes)
- d. Arlington High School (could talk about efforts to get connection to Bikeway into the rebuild plan)
- e. Menotomy Rocks Park (another large open area)
- f. Intersection of Bikeway and Mill St (Could talk about opportunities to further integrate bikeway with local businesses)

- g. Town Hall (could talk about gardens; originally designed by Olmsted Brothers in 1939)
- h. Window to the Mystic Lake (small park, part of popular ride around lake)
- i. Rotary at Mystic Valley Parkway (potential redesign, new bike accommodations)
- j. Broadway near Mass Ave (intersection with potential for redesign, better bike accommodations)
- k. Alewife (start of Minuteman Bikeway)
- l. Magnolia Park (Blue Bike station, close to Lake Street/new signal)

How to organize? Galen Mook (Executive director, MassBike) can provide handouts, stickers.

Working group (Tonkin, Smith, Jack Johnson) discussed having multiple loop options, e.g., around Mystic Lake could be a family-friendly option, or up Mass Ave and back down the Bikeway, etc.

Adam MacNeill: Path on south/west side of Spy Pond is still closed for dredging.

Kobaslija: Supportive, but unable to volunteer 26 September (out of town).

Sofio: Interested in volunteering at Mass Ave/Appleton.

Johnson: Interested in volunteering at Mill Street or Great Meadows. Maybe not all points will have a volunteer available, or limit the map to locations with volunteers? Working group was not clear on Town guidance for in-person activities in view of COVID Delta variant.

Amstutz: Original COVID restrictions ending in June with the end of the State of Emergency. There are restrictions on indoor gatherings now, but unless there is new State guidance, nothing prevents outdoor gatherings. (Or indoor, with masks — online meetings are recommended because of mask requirement.)

Smith: Given that the Town is accepting registrations for the upcoming Town Day road race (even though there is no Town Day) no reason not to move forward unless that is canceled. Re: proposed route, there is a lot of root damage on the trail from the Rotary to River St. As an alternative to self-guided tour, we could possibly have in-person mini tours, e.g., one around eastern points, one around the lakes, one in the Heights. Not sure which is easier to manage/more appealing to potential participants.

Tonkin: Would need fewer volunteers for 3 loop tours, could have 1 or 2 per loop. Don't want to be overly ambitious.

Alex Levering: Aware that the City of Cambridge does similar rides, but haven't participated in those. Interested in the mix of historical/bike infrastructure focus.

Tonkin: We could go all-in on one or the other, but having both may broaden appeal. We would develop a handout/text for the website on each point, we don't have those already written.

Goff: Have learned a lot from these in the past, sounds great, just need to hope for good weather.

Amstutz: Don't know if 12 volunteers is feasible, what do you most want people to hear about in person? Could use the Town website for info on parks, Great Meadow. For transportation projects there are lots of materials on the Town website. Materials could be reused for other scheduled events or at any time.

MacNeill: Not able to volunteer on the 26th, but happy to work on a flyer or collect/format information.

Mayo-Wells: Clarify volunteer timeframe (9:30-11:30). Available on 26th, prefer not in East Arlington, but could do any location.

Tonkin: Seems like there is interest but the volunteer pool is limited, maybe just a few locations. Adam, it may help to coordinate with Jack on write-ups, likely some materials available on ABAC mission. Should we keep unattended locations?

Levering: Can someone create a map showing the bike infrastructure layer, e.g., that Minuteman is an off road path, or if there are separated bike lanes, so a family could identify the best route to take?

Tonkin: We have had police escorts for previous tours. There are few paved off-road paths in Town, mainly Minuteman, and Fitchburg Cutoff path by Alewife. Mystic Valley Parkway is hardpack but in poor condition, the path on the south side of Spy Pond is closed. Bike lanes on Mass Ave, playgrounds for children at Spy Pond and Rec Center.

Smith: Town GIS Map does have off road paths, but not sure about on-road bike lanes. For volunteering, interested in figuring out a good route between the final points that avoids the problematic stretch near River St. Still thinking about mini-tour vs. self-guided.

Amstutz: Connect Arlington data is in GIS, should be exportable, available to merge into Google Map.

Johnson: Fewer locations would highlight, concentrate what we want to communicate. Need to make sure if someone tries to do all locations that it is a safe ride. Like self-guided tour idea overall, it enables someone to do as few or many as they care to.

Levering: Can help with GIS Mapping.

6. Bates Road striping.

Tonkin: Road was repaved, we had some prior discussion a couple months ago about the possibility of adding a bike lane; DPW was not initially supportive.

Amstutz: Will cover as part of agenda item 9

7. Mass Ave/Mystic St/Bikeway traffic signal intersection issues revisited.

Sofio: Status of bike count data?

Amstutz: Hasn't been top priority, and still missing data from one volunteer. Have done some work to reconcile counts based on signal cycles with times. Your Massbike blog post (https://www.massbike.org/arlingtonbikecounts_petrusofio) was helpful.

8. Update on the Design Review Committee for Mass Ave/Appleton.

Amstutz: Planned to be on agenda for Select Board meeting on 13 September. It appears that the board is not fully in favor of the option (Option 2) recommended by the design review committee.

See:

<https://www.arlingtonma.gov/town-governance/boards-and-committees/mass-ave-appleton-design-review-committee>

<https://www.arlingtonma.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/57166/637612536446870000>

Goff: 2 questions, 1 where will it be on the agenda, 2 can you provide more detail on the impression that the board is not supportive?

Amstutz: 1, Typically would fall under traffic rules and orders (after appointments, licenses, open forum). 2, have heard directly from Town Manager (TM) Chapdelaine that the votes are not there right now.

Tonkin: Has TM specified what the Board's concerns are with Option 2?

Amstutz: Loss of parking, concerns raised by DPW about turn lane (disagreement about how important it is to improving the safety of the intersection). Impressions are that a traffic signal is the only thing that will remove the conflict entirely, but since Green International (design consultant) had included the turn lane in their proposal and advocated for it, that not having the turn lane would be a safety deficiency.

Tonkin: Traffic signal is a long-term solution, but we are trying to achieve a short-term solution before finding funding for a signal.

Sofio: MassBike is planning a blogpost and action alert letter. EALS is also organizing discussion for public comments for Sept 13. Frustrating, there has been a fatality, 4 injuries, including one in 2021. Not sure how ABAC can support, but it is important.

Tonkin: Represented ABAC in Appleton Design Review Committee and voted for Option 2.

Sofio: Understand that lanes/parking are concerns but still very frustrating that 15 months after the fatal crash no action has been taken. Might have been better to pursue curb extensions separately, then address on-road improvements?

Mayo-Wells: Should we have a fallback position? Several people in the virtual room are smarter than I am about traffic engineering impacts, but as someone who commutes eastbound on Mass Ave in North Cambridge and has to deal with the 2300/2400 block where the bike lane disappears, I wonder, if we cannot remove the parking spaces on the south side of Mass Ave entirely, would it be possible to prohibit parking during morning rush hour? So morning bike traffic from the Heights, Lexington, etc. would not have to contend with parked cars, but businesses would have parking available for patrons after 10am. Might that be a net good, or would it muddy the waters?

Goff: Could be an improvement, but it would muddy the waters, would create an enforcement burden, there would be confusion about signs, and local businesses would likely still not be happy. Question for Daniel, from previous meeting my impression of DPW's position was that concerns about the lack of the left turn lane were 2-fold: 1, cars encroaching into the bike lane rather than wait for a vehicle turning left ahead of them; 2, long-term concern that road geometry may not accommodate left turn lane/signal if a bike lane is present. My sense was that they were reasonably satisfied with a solution that would provide a little extra space for the westbound lane and allow through traffic to get around a vehicle turning left without encroaching into the bike lane. Did that thinking change?

Amstutz: Have shared what was relayed to me from TM, can say that was brought up, and even with the turn lane, there are some parking impacts. Trying to find a good compromise between needs of business and bike communities, lose as little parking as

possible. Still resistance from DPW, not necessarily with design, but implementation time frame, what pieces can be implemented. Agree with Petru that curb extension would be a big improvement now, hoping to get that done sooner.

From the Planning Department side, with TM support, the plan is to present both options shared with the Mass Ave/Appleton Design Review Committee, and explain the committee's recommendation of Option 2 (and that Public Works participated in those discussions), and leave it to the Select Board to decide. If they are really uncomfortable with the substantial parking removal of Option 2, Option 1 has most of the features except dedicated bike lane space.

Goff: To clarify, the left turn lane still would remove parking on one side. It's difficult to consider it a short-term project because it requires relocation of a crosswalk, need to rebuild ADA-compliant ramp (taking into consideration drainage, grading issues) — not just quick striping, a medium/long-term project with costs in multi \$100K range, likely a year or more to implement.

Sofio: Concerned implementation time frame could drag on; Select Board voted in July on Chestnut St, and so far only one "No Turn on Red" sign has been installed. Seems likely the board will vote for Option 1, need to show why it is insufficient.

Amstutz: We want to avoid a situation where the Board sees only one alternative and does not approve it.

Tonkin: As a committee is there anything we can do (or shouldn't do?)

Mayo-Wells: Regardless of committee affiliation, we're all still private citizens and entitled to contact elected representatives

Smith: One important thing missing from Option 1, would need a "Bicycles May Use Full Lane" sign eastbound (going down hill). Not safe to pass at downhill speed, will create blindspots. Bottom line, Option 1 is incomplete and doesn't solve the problem as it stands.

Sofio: Did recommend "Use Full Lane" sign in July, but was more focused on supporting Option 2 (including other signage recommendations, "Left Turn Yield," et cetera. Good point that Option 1 has not been through final review.

Amstutz: We did some revisions on Option 2, but not on Option 1.

Tonkin: If the board votes for Option 1, is it "as-is" or could we develop further?

Amstutz: Up to the board, they could ask for tweaks. Might have to pay a consultant to develop alternatives. Trying to avoid an endless cycle of alternatives. Important to note

that to arrive at the recommendation of Option 2, the committee went through a long process with lots of discussion and public engagement.

Sofio: It would be odd to vote against the committee recommendation, but it is up to the Board.

Goff: Calls into question the value of forming a committee, if its recommendations are overruled.

Sofio: Vote hasn't happened yet, can contact board members, attend the meeting, submit public comment.

Amstutz: Christopher to your earlier question, it's certainly with ABAC's purview to send a letter from the committee

Mayo-Wells moves that ABAC send a letter advising the Select Board that ABAC supports Option 2

Smith seconds; motion carries 6-0

Sofio: Will the vote likely be on the 13th, or might the meeting run to 2 nights?

Amstutz: Would be surprised if carried to 2nd night.

Tonkin: Generally meetings just run long.

9. General updates from Daniel:

See: <https://www.arlingtonma.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/57582>

Amstutz: 4 things to cover

- a. Minuteman Bikeway Planning Project
Contracting with Kittelson & Associates. Project kick off in a few weeks, looking for 2-3 ABAC members to serve as informal steering committee, through spring 2022.

Meetings would most probably be virtual or with virtual option. 3 public meetings would cover the current state, proposal, and final plan.

- Provide feedback documents received from consultant: on community survey, other aspects (intersection safety, waysides/lighting, etc. as needed)

- Not expected to be a huge time commitment (flexible), consultant is planning for 4 project team meetings, 3 public meetings

Johnson, Kobaslija, Sofio, and Tonkin volunteer.

- b. Mystic to Minuteman Connection
 MassTrails grant \$80K + \$10K from Lawrence & Lillian Solomon Foundation
 RFP for consultant out this week or next
 Conducted a very productive field review with Mystic River Watershed Association, MassDOT, DCR, MAPC, and Solomon Foundation.
 Project will create plan for creating trail connection and review alternatives for route alignment and intersection crossings (especially rotaries).
 Project must complete by June 30, 2022.
- c. Data Update: Swan Place Counter and Bluebikes
 Continuing problems with pedestrian counter; only showing cyclist data.
 Battery was dead during March, very little data for that month. Daily average for 2021 tracking lower than 2019, higher than 2020 (counter originally installed in June 2019; some counter reliability issues in 2020 data from July/Aug)
 Total trips YTD: 326,459 (tracking toward yearly 750K estimate)
 Bike trips YTD: 178,439: ~40K in May, 41K in June, ~37K in July (rainy), ~21 in Aug to date
 Bluebikes: ~5K trips YTD; ~1.1K/mo; Bikeway stations perform best – 50% of all trips
- d. Bike Lanes/Accommodations as part of Connect Arlington Implementation
 Now that Connect Arlington is endorsed by the Select Board, moving into implementation. The goals are established as part of Town Plan e.g., creating "A Low-Stress Bicycling Environment," with supporting strategies such as "Prioritizing new bicycle facilities" and "Establish preferred bike routes".
 Consultant produced a "Recommended Bicycle Network" map (using the pre-existing "Lane Sharing Map") to show recommended facilities (which the old map didn't specify). Need to figure out how to make these projects happen.
 Having been reviewing the "Context Sensitive Bike Facility Design Matrix" <https://www.arlingtonma.gov/home/showdocument?id=25810> (adopted in 2014). Document is a good start, obviously represents a lot of work, provides a foundation to work from.

However there are concerns with the document and how it is being applied. Tends to go the lowest common denominator (no bike facilities considered where there would be some challenges).

The Connect Arlington plan calls for all-ages, all-ability network, but DPW interprets the matrix to indicate that all the streets planned to be repaved in 2021 (Bates Rd, River St, Medford St) will all be shared lane markings with no dedicated bike facilitation (likely because of on-street parking).

There are also concerns with the process (inadequate advance notice).

Even when there is enough space for dedicated bike facilitation without removing parking (as on Lake Street) it can still be challenging to get bike facilitation into the work plan.

Want to revise the matrix to align with Connect Arlington plan and current goals:

- Strengthen provisions to create all-ages, all-abilities bike network
- Longer-term planning and collaborative process with transparency and public engagement
- Incorporate new State and national guidance (particularly MassDOT bike lane, bikeability guidance) — extend matrix beyond restriping

Also need to revise Complete Streets policy to support Connect Arlington goals.

And work on including bike boulevards and treatments for local streets that are still critical links in the bike network (not covered by current matrix).

Two options for Bates/River/Medford:

- Proceed with sharrows and address bike issues in future projects
- Planning Department recommendation: Install essential pavement markings (double yellow line, crosswalks) now, and add new bike markings next year (after revisions to the matrix)

Plan to work with TAC to revise matrix, assume 1 or 2 volunteers from ABAC to meet, review drafts, research (if needed) to make case for why bike accommodations are important for the Town.

Smith: Matrix was originally for restriping projects, limited in scope and 7 years is a long time (bike accommodation best practices have been

rapidly evolving). Immediately concerned with finishing signage and lane markings for Lake St. Also Lowell St, DPW proposed only sharrows, but there is space for a bike lane on the south side (no parking). Support the planning department proposal, but parking will likely be an issue for these streets (and Warren, Broadway) that don't have space for better bike facilitation without removing parking on at least one side.

Amstutz: Parking is "the elephant in the room." Agree on Lake, Lowell St, this points out the lack of transparency, visibility into the DPW planning process.

Sofio: Also support the Planning Department recommendation. Matrix needs more guidance for speed limits relative to bike facilitation, and would also like to see green-backed sharrows adopted. Happy to offer guidance about evolving bike facilitation, very aware of trends in Cambridge, which is on the leading edge nationally. May want to prioritize streets with network connections (like Medford to Chestnut St, which will get buffered like lanes).

Johnson: Thoughts and advice from long term involvement with ABAC: acknowledge the frustration. Strategically this is a great moment to update the matrix in view of Connect Arlington and Complete Streets having been adopted by the Town. Joint meeting between the Planning Department, Town Manager's office and DPW could be productive, propose a process that includes notification of paving, construction, etc.

Mayo-Wells: Suggest to approach constructively, work to understand DPW concerns. I don't understand why this relationship has a combative dynamic, but presume that budget, person-power resources are constrained. Helping DPW with their problems might be a beneficial framework.

Tonkin: Really missing advance communication of plans – with TAC, ABAC. Understand that construction delays are a reality, but still need to know what is on the docket for the year, with opportunity to provide input.

Smith: In fairness to DPW, they want a more collaborative relationship and want to get things right, but they do suffer crunches (and they have not pushed hard for bike accommodation that requires parking removal). Summit meeting sounds good, but start by assuming good will.

Amstutz: Many of these good points touch on aspects of the plan, e.g., advance communication is covered under Local Transportation

Improvement (for all transportation projects). Already starting to meet more frequently between the Planning Department, TM, DPW to talk about budget and transportation funding.

Goff: This issue is representative of the growing pains of Arlington as a bike-friendly community. Have hit a threshold. Lots of things in the plan will require removing parking. Appleton is an important test case, if we can't move forward with the plan in the face of opposition to parking removal, it will be difficult to make progress on other fronts.

Amstutz: We need better data collection. On Bates I can anecdotally see the utilized parking spaces are minimal, but we need metrics/data. How do we define how much parking is needed?

Goff: Need to establish thresholds for turnover, residential vs. commercial parking.

10. Tales from the Bikeway, matters arising from the Bikeway e.g. encroachment and center line markings.

Tonkin: Received correspondence from Peggy Enders (Lexington Bicycle Advisory Committee) about a concern that the Mill St Stop sign is on the left hand side, not the right, and seasonally obscured by leaves.

Playground at Hill's Hill has a new path to the Bikeway, which was previously an informal mud path.

Amstutz: It's a Recreation Department project to create an ADA accessible pathway from the bikeway to Hill's Hill playground and to the parking lot.

Tonkin: Need to make sure there's appropriate signage, stop sign, "look both ways," concerned about the risk of kids darting onto the bikeway.

Kobaslija: Playground entrance is further up, although the path was there, not used much by kids. Doesn't seem like as much of a problem as Trader Joe's entrance.

Tonkin: Need to get Trader Joe's re-marked, paint is nearly gone.

11. Other Business

Action item: Tonkin to draft letter to board, run by Johnson to review

Action Item: Johnson, MacNeill, Smith, Tonkin to meet 25 Aug to finalize plans

Next month's meeting on the 22nd, not the 15th (Holiday).

Smith moves to Adjourn

Adjourned